Hamilton Field,
Company Officers' Quarters Type A
(Facility Nos. 210, 212, 214, 217, 220)
Sunset Drive
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS

HABS No. CA-2398-BF

21-NOVA

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HAMILTON FIELD

Company Officers' Quarters, Type A (Facility Nos. 210, 212, 214, 217, 220)

HABS No. CA-239B-BF

Location:

Hamilton Army Air Field

Novato, Marin County, California Company Officers' Quarters, Type A

Facility Nos. 210 (210 Sunset Drive), 212 (212 Sunset Drive), 214 (214 Sunset Drive), 217 (217 Sunset Drive), 220 (220 Sunset Drive), and

223 (223 Sunset Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980) Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980) UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;

C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Military families

Present Use: Residential

Statement of Significance:

The Type A Company Officers' Quarters (COQ) are among the original residential units designed by the Constructing Quartermaster's Office at Hamilton Army Air Field. The homes were equipped with all modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as an example of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

- 1. Date of Erection: Construction on COQ Type A housing was completed on July 31, 1933 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
- 2. Architect: Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spancer, Chiaf Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Peters and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermastar's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
- 3. Original Owner: Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The parmanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
- 4. Builder, Contractor, Supplier: Robert E. McKee Company built Facility Nos. 210, 212, 214, 217, 220, and 223 for a cost of \$12,083.31 each, completing all COQ Type A houses.
- 5. Original Plans and Construction: Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals have not been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, in San Bruno, California, and can be accessed through the U. S. Navy. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the permanent housing, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, California. Early views of the permanent housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in

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the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, California.

6. Alterations/Additions: Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. Some interior fixtures in the remainder of the house have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures. The porches on all units were enclosed in 1934 or 1956.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churriguerresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equipped with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, and tiled bathrooms.

2. Condition of fabric: All of the permanent Army housing is in excellent condition. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since they took over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

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B. Description of Exterior:

- 1. Overall dimensions: The Company Officers' Quarters Type A dwellings were constructed in an "L" plan, with a two-story mass and a one-story wing. The front elevations feature recessed entryways, cantilevered wrought iron second story balconies, and recessed windows with decorative windowheads. They measure 48 feet 8 inches wide by 51 feet deep. All have partially below grade basements.
- 2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measure two feet wide at the base and one foot wide above the basement floor.
- 3. Walls: Exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile bricks with reinforced concrete tie beams. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of recessed windowheads with a small pointed arch, projecting reinforced cast concrete window sills, and cast concrete grilles.
- 4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced walls incorporating a continuous reinforced concrete tie beam, with wood-framed load-bearing interior walls. Roof systems consist of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each dwelling is accessed via a concrete stoop covered with a Mission tile shed-roof supported by wood Mission-style brackets. Cantilevered wrought iron decorative balconies are located on the central front upper stories of each building; they have wrought iron railings and metal flooring with a cast concrete sill. Concrete porches with exterior stairways provide access to the rear hallways on each side elevation. They have arched entryways, Mission tile shed roofs, and wrought iron railings.
- 6. Chimneys: A partially stucco-clad brick chimney is located on the exterior living room wall of each building. Three bands of brick circle the chimney halfway up its length, producing a stepped effect. Cast iron cleanout doors and frames are at the base of the chimneys.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are accessed by the front stoops; secondary doors are at the side elevations and on the rear center walls. The primary door is solid core oak and has numerous deeply recessed panels in a geometric pattern. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with four lights originally made with wire plate glass over three recessed panels. Garage doors are the overhead segmented type with one row of lights above two rows of three recessed panels and replaced original hinged, swing doors.

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b. Windows/shutters: Original windows were screened multi-paned metal casement sash; replacement windows are metal and glass, with multi-lights. Porches have been enclosed with the installation of jalousie windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape/covering: The houses have gabled roofs on the first and second floor central masses, with a shed roof in the central portion. They are clad in terra cotta Mission tiles. The enclosed porch and portico has copper gutters, downspouts, and scuppers; the main house has no gutters.
- b. Cornice/eaves: Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor Plans:
 - a. Basement: Basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and interior stairways from the kitchen hallways. Each floor plan is divided into a garage, boiler room, and storage room. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.
 - b. First Floor: The primary access to the homes is through a central hall, with a living room and porch on one side and dining room, kitchen, pantry, and maid's room and bath on the other.
 - c. Second Floor: Rooms on the second floor include a master bedroom with bath and dressing room, and two other bedrooms and a bathroom.
- 2. Stairways: The COQ Type A housing units are served by an interior stairway from the first floor hallway to the second floor and another from the kitchen area to the basement. The primary staircases consist of oak treads and risers with wooden banisters and alternating square and twisted wrought iron balustrades. The newel posts and handrails are oak.
- 3. Flooring: Flooring in the hallways, living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms is red oak. The porches have quarry tile floors. Flooring in the kitchens is Douglas fir covered with vinyl or asphalt tile, added after 1961. The kitchen and pantry floor originally was covered with linoleum. The basement and garage have concrete floors, smooth finished. Flooring in the bathrooms is one- by one-inch and one- by two-inch ceramic tile in a variety of colors. The main bathrooms have marble thresholds and the maid's bathroom threshold is wood or marble. All other thresholds are metal.

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4. Wall/ceiling finish: All rooms on the first and second floors have painted plaster walls and ceilings. Basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Bathroom walls are partially covered with four-inch ceramic tile, with baseboards and trim in a contrasting color.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways/doors: Archways provide access from the central hallways to the living rooms and dining rooms. French doors access the enclosed porches from the living rooms. A two-panel swing door is present between the pantry and the dining room. All other doors are solid core wood with two or three recessed plywood panels.
- 6. Decorative features/trim: The living rooms have gabled wood ceilings with four sets of exposed Mission-style double beam rafters. The enclosed porch has a wood beam ceiling. Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Molding above the hallway cabinets is coved; all other cornices have picture molding. Each home has a living room fireplace constructed of cast concrete with chamfered pilasters and brackets supporting a mantel. A row of four-inch-square decorative ceramic tile surrounds the firebox. Hearths are six-inch red quarry tile.
- 7. Hardware: The door hardware consists of a nickel-plated decorative circular knob and escutcheon made by Corbin Company. The front door and French doors have hammered metal thumblatch handles. The built-in cabinets in all rooms but the kitchen and pantry have porcelain or glass knobs. The original electric plates are plastic and are extant in most of the units. Metal "Dixie" brand bells connected to the electric front doorbells are located in the kitchens.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Steam radiators made by American Radiator or Crane Radiator companies are located in each room and provide heating. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basements, made by Ideal Gas Boiler or Bryant Tubular Gas Boiler Co., Cleveland, Ohio. Some boilers have valves made in Germany in the early 1930s that are stamped with a swastika emblem.
- b. Kitchen Appliances: No original kitchen appliances were noted.
- c. Ventilation: Ventilation for the attics is through Mission tile vents in the gable ends. The front facade has a decorative quatrefoil-designed wood louvre in the gable. Basement vents are three Mission tiles.

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- d. Lighting: Houses have knob and tube wiring and circuit breaker boxes. The original lighting in the first floor hallways consists of a hanging wrought iron circular fixture with a canopy and chain. Lighting in the living rooms included two sconces with candle lights and consisted of a shield decorated with a knight and castle. Dining room lighting included a wrought iron "Monterey" style fixture with five arms with candle lights, and four triangular shaped wrought iron wall sconces with candle lights. Porch light fixtures were eight-sided wrought iron sconces with rooster finials and eight-sided frosted glass. Hallway lighting consisted of a castmetal canopy with six points. Bedroom fixtures consist of wall sconces with candle lights on arms and surface mounted canopies with pointed pan glass. Fixtures in the maids' rooms were decorative cast metal with double sockets and candle lights. Original bathroom lights were ceramic wall sconces, flanking the medicine cabinets, and operated by pull chains. Not all lighting fixtures are extant in every unit.
- e. Plumbing: An "Alberene Stone Eagle Guaranteed" cast concrete wash sink is located in each basement. The maid's bathroom on the first floor contains a "Welling" flush valve toilet, a wall-mounted "Tepeco" sink, and an enameled cast iron tub. Bathroom accessories are of nickel-plated brass. Bathrooms on the second floor feature pedestal sinks (Trenton Pottery Co., Tepeco), "Crane" or "Standard" flush valve toilets, cast iron tubs, and the original ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holders, and black plastic-covered wood towel racks. Shower fixtures are porcelain and metal made by "Crane." The original mirrored metal medicine cabinets are located above the sinks. Some units have replacement sinks or faucets, but appear to be in original condition otherwise.
- 9. Original Furnishings: Original furnishings are built-in and include wood bookcases flanking the living room fireplace with windows in a recessed square above the cases. The pantries feature solid core wooden cabinets and doors with recessed panels. A telephone cabinet is in the hall and linen closets are upstairs. All have white glass or porcelain knobs. Some bedrooms have built-in dressing room cabinets with drawers. Built-in pull-down "Berklee" ironing boards, with two recessed wood panel doors, are located in the kitchens. Kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission-style hammered metal hinges and latches and were added in 1955, replacing the original recessed panel cabinets. Originally the kitchens had a porcelain-topped cabinet with a mounted flour sifter and sugar canister and a ventilated vegetable cupboard. These were removed in 1955.

D. Site:

1. General site orientation: The primary facades of the Company Officers' Quarters Type A face easterly toward Sunset Drive and San Pablo Bay. Located in the original

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Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on the crest of a rolling hill, they are surrounded by other officers' quarters of like design.

2. Historic landscape design: Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next and the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the Company Officers' permanent housing area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy popular for barrier plantings here, as in the NCO area. The Company Officers' private space was also delimited with California bigtree, silver poplar, coast redwood, white ironbark, black locust, Monterey pine, California fan palm, and Mexican fan palm. Compared to the NCO area the density and diversity of the plantings increased noticeably as one moved uphill.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. Exclusive to the Company Officers' housing area were Chinese photinia, strawberry tree, and citrus cultivars. During the primary occupation at Hamilton foundation shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-shaped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings have become quite large and overgrown and appear as accent plants.

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Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast with the foundation plantings. In the front and back of the residences New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae are prominent. The most striking difference between this housing area and the NCO area is the incorporation of accent plantings between houses. Several species were incorporated in this manner and not used elsewhere on base, although their use is generally limited to a single tree between houses. While the list of plants used for this purpose is long, representative species, include magnolia, avocado, cherry, weeping cypress, California peppertree, deodar cedar, and Norway spruce. The open space in the center of traffic circles in this area (North and South Circle) were planted with large and striking conifers, most prominently atlas cedar, deodar cedar, cost redwood, cypress, incense cedar, and California bigtree. Many of these were transported to base as mature trees, as per Nurses' orders.

In addition to the plantings around the Company Officers' housing, the outer margin of Perimeter Road (which rings the residential area) is bordered with a planting of northern California black walnut and Canary Island date palm. Occasional Canary Island pine and other upright conifers were added to the rears of the houses along the outer margins of the base.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See nerrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-239B).

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-239B).

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-239B).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

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Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S. U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

F. Supplemental Material:

See also the project Field Record, roll 91, exposures 1-12; and roll 92, exposures 1-2.

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 210, 212, 214, 217, 220, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations

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implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

